

## Sherlock Holmes Story

### The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez

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dignity which compelled obedience. The old man lay back in his chair with a twitching face and stared at her with brooding eyes.

"Yes, sir, I am your prisoner," she said. "From where I stood I could hear everything, and I know that you have learned the truth. I confess it all. It was I who killed the young man. But you are right—you who say it was an accident. I did not even know that it was a knife which I held in my hand, for in my despair I snatched anything from the table and struck at him to make him let me go. It is the truth that I tell."

"Madam," said Holmes, "I am sure that it is the truth. I fear that you are far from well."

She had turned a dreadful color, the more ghastly under the dark dust streaks upon her face. She seated herself on the side of the bed; then she resumed.

"I have only a little time here," she said, "but I would have you to know the whole truth. I am this man's wife. He is not an Englishman. He is a Russian. His name I will not tell."

For the first time the old man stirred. "God bless you, Anna!" he cried. "God bless you!"

She cast a look of the deepest disdain in his direction. "Why should you cling so hard to that wretched life of yours, Sergius?" said she. "It has done harm to many and good to none, not even yourself. However, it is not for me to cause the frail thread to be snapped before God's time. I have enough already upon my soul since I crossed the threshold of this cursed house. But I must speak or I shall be too late."

"I have said, gentlemen, that I am this man's wife. He was fifty and I a foolish girl of twenty when we married. It was in a city of Russia, a university—I will not name the place."

"God bless you, Anna!" murmured the old man again.

"We were reformers, revolutionists, nihilists, you understand—he and I and many more. Then there came a time of trouble. A police officer was killed, many were arrested, evidence was wanted, and in order to save his own life and earn a great reward my husband betrayed his own wife and his companions. Yes, we were all arrested upon his confession. Some of us found our way to the gallows and some to Siberia. I was among these last, but my term was not for life. My husband came to England with his ill gotten gains and has lived in quiet ever since, knowing well that if the Brotherhood knew where he was not a week would pass before justice would be done."

The old man reached out a trembling hand and helped himself to a cigarette. "I am in your hands, Anna," said he. "You were always good to me."

"I have not yet told you the height of his villainy," said she. "Among our comrades of the order there was one who was the friend of my heart. He was noble, unselfish, loving—all that my husband was not. He hated violence. We were all guilty, if that is guilt, but he was not. He wrote forever dissuading us from such a course. These letters would have saved him. So would my diary, in which from day to day I had entered both my feelings toward him and the view which each of us had taken. My husband found and kept both diary and letters. He hid them, and he tried hard to swear away the young man's life. In this he failed, but Alexis was sent a convict to Siberia, where now at this moment he works in a salt mine. Think of that, you villain, you villain—now, now, at this very moment, Alexis, a man whose name you are not worthy to speak, works and lives like a slave, and yet I have your life in my hands, and I let you go!"

"You were always a noble woman, Anna," said the old man, puffing at his cigarette.

She had risen, but she fell back again with a little cry of pain.

"I must finish," she said. "When my term was over I set myself to get the diary and letters which, if sent to the Russian government, would procure my friend's release. I knew that my husband had come to England. After months of searching I discovered where he was. I knew that he still had the diary, for when I was in Siberia I had a letter from him once reproaching me and quoting some passages from its pages. Yet I was sure that, with his revengeful nature, he would never give it to me of his own free will. I must get it for myself. With this object I engaged an agent from a private detective firm, who entered my husband's house as a secretary. It was your second secretary, Sergius—the one who left you so hurriedly. He found that papers were kept in the cupboard, and he got an impression of the key. He would not go further. He furnished me with a plan of the house, and he told me that in the forenoon the study was always empty, as the secretary was employed up here. So at last I took my courage in both hands, and I came down to get the papers for myself. I succeeded, but at what a cost! I had just taken the papers and was locking the cupboard when the young man seized me. I had seen him already that morning. He had met me on the road, and I had asked him to tell me where Professor Coram lived, not knowing that he was in his employ."

"Exactly! Exactly!" said Holmes.

"The secretary came back and told his employer of the woman he had met. Then in his last breath he tried to send a message that it was she—the she whom he had just discussed with him."

"You must let me speak," said the woman in an imperative voice, and her face contracted as if in pain. "When he had fallen I rushed from the room, chose the wrong door and found myself in my husband's room. He spoke of giving me up. I showed him that if he did so his life was in my hands. If he gave me to the law, I could give him to the Brotherhood. It was not that I wished to live for my own sake, but it was that I desired to accomplish my purpose. He knew that I would do what I said—that his own fate was involved in mine. For that reason, and for no other, he shielded me. He thrust me into that dark hiding place—a relic of old days, known only to himself. He took his meals in his own room, and so was able to give me part of his food. It was agreed that when the police left the house I should slip away by night and come back no more. But in some way you have read our plans."

She tore from the bosom of her dress a small packet. "These are my last words," said she. "Here is the packet which will save Alexis. I confide it to your honor and to your love of justice. Take it! You will deliver it at the Russian embassy. Now, I have done my duty, and"—

"Stop her!" cried Holmes. He had bounded across the room and had wrenched a small vial from her hand. "Too late!" she said, sinking back on the bed. "Too late! I took the poison before I left my hiding place. My head swims! I am going! I charge you, sir, to remember the packet."

"A simple case, and yet in some ways an instructive one," Holmes remarked as we traveled back to town. "It hinged from the outset upon the pince-nez. But for the fortunate chance of the dying man having seized these I am not sure that we could ever have reached our solution. It was clear to me, from the strength of the glasses, that the wearer must have been very blind and helpless when deprived of them. When you asked me to believe that she walked along a narrow strip of grass without once making a false step I remarked, as you may remember, that it was a noteworthy performance. In my mind I set it down as an impossible performance save in the unlikely case that she had a second pair of glasses. I was forced, therefore, to seriously consider the hypothesis that she had remained within the house. On perceiving the similarity of the two corridors it became clear that she might very easily have made such a mistake, and in that case it was evident that she must have entered the professor's room. I was keenly on the alert, therefore, for whatever would bear out this supposition, and I examined the room narrowly for anything in the shape of a hiding place. The carpet seemed continuous and firmly nailed, so I dismissed the idea of a trapdoor. There might well be a recess behind the books. As you are aware, such devices are common in old libraries. I observed that books were piled on the floor at all other points, but that one bookcase was left clear. This, then, might be the door. I could see no marks to guide me, but the carpet was of a dun color, which lends itself very well to examination. I therefore smoked a great number of those excellent cigarettes, and I dropped the ash all over the space in front of the suspected bookcase. It was a simple trick, but exceedingly effective. I then went downstairs, and I ascertained in your presence, Watson, without your perceiving the drift of my remarks, that Professor Coram's consumption of food had increased—as one would expect when he is supplying a second person. We then ascended to the room again, when, by upsetting the cigarette box, I obtained a very excellent view of the floor and was able to see quite clearly from the traces upon the cigarette ash that the prisoner had in our absence come out from her retreat. Well, Hopkins, here we are at Charing Cross, and I congratulate you on having brought your case to a successful conclusion. You are going to headquarters, no doubt. I think, Watson, you and I will drive together to the Russian embassy."

"Unanswerable. Maiden Aunt—Caroline, you don't know how to train children. I've been nothing how you deal with Johnny. Nine out of every ten injunctions you lay upon him are 'don't's.' Married Niece—Why, Aunt Abigail, nine of the Ten Commandments are 'don't's'—Chicago Tribune.

**THE BRIDES OF VENICE.**  
An Ancient Custom That Once Had a Rude Interruption.

In the year 902, according to old custom, all the brides for the year at Venice assembled on St. Mary's eve at the cathedral, taking with them their dowries in small chests. There they awaited their bridegrooms, who followed them, and after mass they were married and received the bishop's blessing.

In this year the sea rovers of Trieste burst in upon the expectant maidens, who were all dressed in white, with hair loosely flowing and interwoven with threads of gold, carried them off to their barks and hoisted sail.

The dogs of Venice summoned his men to arms, pursued the rovers, overtook them in a creek still known as the Port of the Damsels and brought the brides back in triumph.

In memory of this event a solemn procession of twelve young women took place yearly, and the Marian games were observed with great splendor until the year 1879, when they were discontinued in a time of disastrous war.—London Standard.

## AFTER THE SQUALL

By HONORE WILLISIE

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The lake lay smooth and dark like a piece of smoked glass. Along the shore the early green of the trees melted into the hazy gray of the sky. At the college pier the reflection of the pier posts wavered serenely from the reflected roof of the boathouse.

"Fit to give one the nightmare," Peggy exclaimed as Jack handed her carefully into the boat.

"It does look squally," said Jack, taking up the oars; "the sky, I mean, not the reflection."

"Pooh!" answered Peggy, curling herself up in the stern of the boat. "Do you suppose I'm going to let the prospect of a mere squall spoil my first boat ride of the year? Besides, we both can swim, can't we?"

Jack stared at Peggy with what was intended for a look of withering disdain.

"You bet, Peggy, if I thought there was any danger in this stunt I'd not take you."

Peggy raised her eyebrows. "Jack, what is the matter with you? Are you trying to be proud and haughty in an old sweater? My child, please recall that you had to be spanked into having your face washed. It is now, oh, Jack, too late to make an impression on my fresh young heart, I—"

"Gee, but you're crazy!" murmured Jack.

"And I," went on Peggy, ignoring the interruption, "I wish to state that this sudden development of courtesy in one who has pulled my hair and whose ears I have boxed both in sorrow and in anger makes me feel the necessity of reminding you that it is useless for you to fuss and put on airs, for you are nothing but a freshman after all."

Jack dug his oars viciously into the water, splashing his own red jersey and Peggy's white sweater.

"Strikes me you entered the same day I did. What time does that bloom-in' matron say you'll have to be back?" "Six o'clock. Otherwise it's Peggy before the house committee, and the Botany club depends on me to get the lichens to them before 7," she answered, making herself into a still smaller ball in the stern seat. The boat leaked a little.

"Oh, we'll be back in time easy. We'll reach the pines in half an hour."

Peggy looked a little anxiously at the sky. "That wind is coming up, Jack," she said. "I guess I'll get out the extra oars and help."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," answered Jack. "It's not a girl's work."

Peggy looked up quickly, then smiled to herself and settled back in her place again. It was very still and sheltered among the pines. The soft new needles smelled deliciously of spring, and the wind was only a faraway sigh in the treetops. The pine trees murmured, robins flickered among the soft fuzz of the new needles. Suddenly Jack pulled out his watch.

"Gee whiz," he said, "it's five minutes of 6!"

Peggy could feel herself going white. "Jack," she gasped, "it's not a funny joke to be hauled up by the house committee. They are all seniors, and no one is so hard on a freshman as a senior. They have been through all these scrapes and know how to strike hard."

They ran to the shore. In the shelter of the pines they had not realized that a heavy squall had grown out of the light wind of the afternoon. The water was thick with whitecaps, and the wind tore across the lake as if determined to aid the house committee against the delinquent Peggy.

Jack looked out at the water with lips tight pressed. "Peggy," he said, "I'll not venture out with you with a sea like that one, house committee or no house committee."

"Jack Howard," replied Peggy, "you've got to."

"Peggy!" He threw back his shoulders and eyed Peggy with dignity. "Peggy, you are not going to be drowned while I am around. I tell you I will not go till the squall is over."

Peggy threw back her girlish shoulders and eyed Jack with even greater dignity than his own.

"I'll not speak to you, Jack Howard, until you launch that boat." And with this she pulled her tam o' shanter down over her curly hair, walked back to the edge of the pines and, sitting down in the needles, stared with marked indifference at the sky above Jack's head.

Jack stood irresolute for a moment. Peggy had never looked more tantalizing. The white tam shaded a face that was almost irresistible, and he was conscious of an insane desire to obey the behests of that capricious, curly head even though so doing might lead to the bottom of the lake. But another look at the water and he withdrew to the foot of the tree opposite Peggy's. After lighting his pipe he studied his boots with impassive face. Minute after minute went by, and the cold spring dusk came on.

"I'm just freezing to this old pine tree," thought Peggy, "but I just won't give in. Doesn't he look dear and tragic, though? I wouldn't have missed this row for anything. Rows do bring out the character so. Now, who would have thought that I could be so firm?"

Little by little as the night settled down the wind sank, and as it sank a fine misting rain set in. Lake and shore, pines and sky slowly melted into one gray green tone that gave

Peggy a shiver of desolation. Jack looked at his watch.

"Half past 7, Peggy," he said. "I am going to launch the boat."

They rowed out into the lake in dignified silence. Peggy, in her old place in the stern, snuggled down into her sweater and wondered how long she must maintain her difficult isolation.

Finally, "We ought to be home in three-quarters of an hour," came in soothing tones from Jack's end of the boat.

No answer from the stern. "A nasty rain," from the rower's bench.

No reply. "It's almost too dark to steer, isn't it?" was inquired tenderly.

Still no reply. Heavier and heavier grew the darkness, and wetter and wetter became the white sweater and the red jersey.

"Oughtn't we to be there by now?" asked a nervous little voice from Peggy's end of the boat.

Jack hauled in his oars, struck a match and looked at his watch. "Gads!" he exclaimed. "It's a quarter after 8. Where in thunder have we got to?"

"There seems to be nothing around us," said Peggy, "but water."

"Steer more to the right, Peggy," said Jack. Then, after half an hour, "Try it to the left."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Peggy. "It's so dark. If we only could find a little something to land on!"

"Now, Peggy, dear," said Jack, "don't be frightened. I'll save you. I calculate that we are clear across the lake by now, and we will land at one of the lake farms and get some one to drive up to town. If we assure the house committee that we have been chaperoned ever since 9 o'clock they won't do very much to you."

"Oh, won't they?" said Peggy derisively. "You don't know them, my dear. They will have the time of their lives over me."

"Then," answered Jack firmly, "they will have me to reckon with."

"Isn't he romantic?" thought Peggy. Then aloud, "Oh, Jack, Jack, there is a light!" And in an instant they were bumping pier posts, the rough sides of which were eagerly grasped by the bedraggled pair in the rowboat. They landed and tied the boat.

"Hey, what's doing down there?" called a man's voice from the shore.

Jack took Peggy's hand. "The owner of the place," he said to her softly. Then he called, "I'm lost with a lady."

There was silence from the shore, and then the man's voice came back through the rain:

"Lost! Who are you?" "I'm John Howard of Hull university."

"All right, come along, Mr. Howard." Jack and Peggy walked carefully up the pier, and through the rain they saw a great building that seemed strangely close to the water for a farmhouse. A man whose face they could not see in the darkness stepped forward.

"Come right in," he said and threw open a door. There on a long bench that faced a racing shell sat a dozen men.

"Hello, Howard!" said one in a surprised sort of way.

With one gasp of disgust Jack pulled Peggy back out of the light.

"The varsity boathouse!" he groaned as they hurried across the campus. "Gee, I have done it! We'll never hear the end of this. We must have rowed clear around that confounded lake. And the way I announced it to that chump who invited us in! We'll never hear the end of this."

"And my dose is a double one," groaned Peggy. "Think of the house committee."

Jack left her at the door of Rose cottage, and Peggy slowly climbed the stairs to report to the matron. But instead of fear a little tremor of joy made her throat quiver, and the prospect of her interview with the house committee was not even a needle point shadow on the clear serenity of her happiness, for as he said good night Jack had held her hand and whispered: "Never mind, dear, we'll grin and bear it together. Won't we?"

**Van Buren's Answers.**

One day the merits of Van Buren were being discussed by a party of politicians on a Hudson river steamboat. One of the party had been dwelling on his noncommittalism and complaining that a plain answer to a plain question was never elicited from him.

"I'll wager dinners for the company," added he, "that if one of us shall go down to the cabin and ask Van Buren the simplest question that can be thought of he will evade a direct answer. Yes, and I'll give you leave, too, to tell Van Buren why you ask the question, and that there is a bet depending on the reply."

This seemed fair enough. One of the party was deputed to go down and try the experiment.

He found Van Buren, whom he knew well, in the saloon and said:

"Mr. Van Buren, some gentlemen on the upper deck have been accusing you of noncommittalism and have just laid a wager that you would not give a plain answer to the simplest question, and they deputed me to test the fact. Now, sir, allow me to ask you, 'Where does the sun rise?'"

Mr. Van Buren's brow contracted; he hesitated a moment, then said:

"The terms east and west are conventional, but—"

"That'll do," interrupted the interrogator. "We have lost the bet!"

**And Got Rid of It.**

Mrs. Pitley—They say he is so unkind to his wife, Mr. Pitley—That shows how people misjudge a man. I know it to be a fact that he spent one whole year endeavoring to make a satisfactory investment of his wife's money.—Town and Country.

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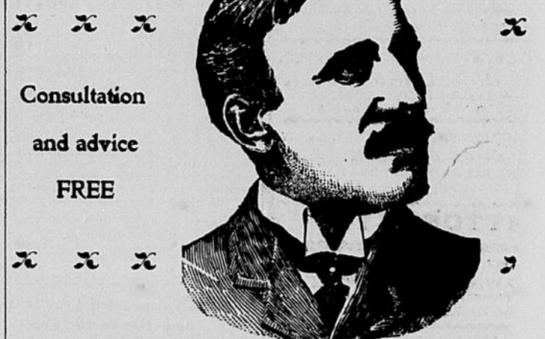
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